

Message Text

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 PRAIA 00221 01 OF 02 231922Z

ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00
HEW-06 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-02 HA-05 CA-01 SCS-06
ICA-20 EB-08 IO-14 AGRE-00 TRSE-00 /100 W
-----031556 232126Z /73

R 231541Z JUN 78

FM AMEMBASSY PRAIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0179

INFO AMEMBASSY BISSAU

AMEMBASSY DAKAR POUCH

AMEMBASSY LISBON

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 PRAIA 0221

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOCI, SPOP, PDEV, ECON

SUBJECT: CAPE VERDE--NINE YEARS OF DROUGHT--"TCHUBA" ALSO MEANS
HOPE

SUMMARY: THE ISLANDS OF CAPE VERDE ARE NOW IN THEIR NINTH YEAR
OF DROUGHT. LAST YEAR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION WAS NIL. THE
ECONOMY IS MORIBUND. UNFORTUNATELY THE POPULATION CONTINUES TO
GROW AT THE RATE OF 2.8 PERCENT PER ANNUM DESPITE INCREASING
IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES. IN SPITE OF ALL OF THESE
PROBLEMS CAPEVERDEANS HAVE NOT YET GIVEN UP HOPE FOR THE ISLANDS.
MANY EXPECT SUBSTANTIAL RAINS TO FALL IN THE ISLANDS WITHIN SIX
WEEKS.

1. THE PRESENT DROUGHT IN CAPE VERDE BEGAN IN EARNEST IN 1968.
EXCEPT FOR A TORRENTIAL DOWNPOUR OF TEN INCHES DURING SIX HOURS
IN 1976 NONE OF THE ISLANDS HAVE HAD ANY APPRECIABLE RAINFALL
DURING THE PAST NINE (9) YEARS. THE ISLANDS ARE DENUDED OF
VEGETATION AND PERHAPS TWO-THIRDS OF THE LIVESTOCK INCLUDING
EVEN THE HARDY GOATS HAVE EITHER PERISHED OR HAVE BEEN
SLAUGHTERED TO PREVENT STARVATION. AT SEVERAL POINTS BRACKISH
AND SALINE WATER HAS BEGUN TO INFILTRATE INTO WELLS
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 PRAIA 00221 01 OF 02 231922Z

AND GALLERIES. A RECENT VISITOR TO CAPE VERDE, SOMEONE WHO
HAS TRAVELLED WIDELY IN THE SAHEL, DESCRIBED CAPE VERDE AS
BEING THE MOST DESOLATE AND HARDEST HIT OF ALL OF THE SAHELIAN
COUNTRIES HE HAD VISITED. AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION OF STAPLES
(CORN AND BEANS) IN 1977 WAS NIL. COFFEE PRODUCTION (FOGO
ISLAND) FELL LAST YEAR TO 87 TONS, DOWN FROM MORE THAN 200
TONS IN 1968. EVEN IF THE RAINS RETURN THIS YEAR COFFEE

PRODUCTION IS EXPECTED TO BE LESS THAN 75 TONS REFLECTING SERIOUS DAMAGE DONE TO THE COFFEE TREES DURING THESE TERRIBLY DRY YEARS. EVEN THE PRODUCTION OF GROG (THE NATIONAL DRINK) HAS BEEN ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY THE DROUGHT. THE HARVEST OF SUGAR CANE FOR GROG LAST YEAR WAS THE SMALLEST IN PERHAPS A CENTURY. ONE OF THE EFFECTS HAS BEEN TO PROMOTE THE PRODUCTION OF GROG FROM WHEAT BRAN, COCONUTS, BANANAS AND OTHER SUBSTITUTES. BOTH THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF GROG HAS DECLINED.

2. ECONOMIC INDICATORS ARE AT AN ALL-TIME LOW REFLECTING A MORIBUND ECONOMY. ON SEVERAL OF THE ISLANDS THE ONLY WORK AVAILABLE IS WITH THE GOVERNMENT RURAL WORKS PROJECTS (CONSTRUCTION OF DAMS, CATCHMENTS, SPILLWAYS, TERRACES, ETC.). UNEMPLOYMENT EXCEEDS FIFTY PERCENT ON FOUR ISLANDS. UNDER-EMPLOYMENT IS COMMON. TO ADD TO AN ALREADY GRIM PICTURE THE GOCV RURAL DEVELOPMENT FUND (GENERATED LARGELY THROUGH THE SALE OF COMMODITIES -- PRINCIPALLY CORN -- DONATED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY) IS ALMOST DEPLETED EVEN THOUGH THE FISCAL YEAR IS ONLY HALF OVER.

3. TAX AND IMPORT DUTY RECEIPTS HAVE FALLEN OFF BY NEARLY THIRTY PERCENT SINCE JANUARY 1978. RECOGNIZING THE DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED BY PROPERTY OWNERS THE GOCV HAS JUST ISSUED A DECREE/LAW REDUCING PROPERTY TAX BY TWO-THIRDS. RENTAL FEES PAID BY SHARECROPPERS HAVE ALSO BEEN REDUCED BY TWO-THIRDS.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 PRAIA 00221 01 OF 02 231922Z

4. HEALTH CONDITIONS ON THE ISLANDS ARE DETERIORATING. AT LEAST TWELVE-HUNDRED CASES OF LEPROSY HAVE BEEN DETECTED IN THE ARCHIPELAGO (FOGO, BRAVA AND SANT ANTAO ISLANDS) AND PELLAGRA IS BECOMING MORE AND MORE COMMON. GOCV HEALTH MINISTRY SOURCES ALSO INDICATE THAT VITAMIN AND MINERAL DEFICIENCIES ARE TAKING THEIR TOLL OF THE CHILDREN IN THE ISLANDS. THE SOLE PSYCHIATRIST ON THE ISLANDS BELIEVES THAT THE INCIDENCE OF MENTAL ILLNESS, ESPECIALLY SCHIZOPHRENIA, IS LIKELY TO INCREASE OVER THE COMING YEARS AS A DIRECT RESULT OF THE DEPRIVATIONS AND DEFICIENCIES SUFFERED DURING THIS PROLONGED DROUGHT. A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF PAIGC RECENTLY SURPRISED HIS LISTENERS BY AFFIRMING AT A PUBLIC GATHERING THAT HE FOUND MANY RESIDENTS OF RURAL AREAS TO BE DISORIENTED AND OVERWHELMED BY THE COMPLEXITY AND DIFFICULTIES OF THE PROBLEMS THEY FACED IN MERELY SURVIVING.

UNCLASSIFIED

NNN

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 PRAIA 00221 02 OF 02 231901Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00
HEW-06 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-02 HA-05 CA-01 SCS-06
ICA-20 EB-08 IO-14 AGRE-00 TRSE-00 /100 W
-----031286 232127Z /73

R 231541Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY PRAIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0180
INFO AMEMBASSY BISSAU
AMEMBASSY DAKAR POUCH
AMEMBASSY LISBON

UNCLAS SECTION 2 OF 2 PRAIA 0221

5. ALTHOUGH DROUGHTS ARE NOT A NEW PHENOMENA TO CAPE VERDE THIS IS BY FAR THE LONGEST AND MOST SEVERE DROUGHT IN MEMORY. MOST CAPEVERDEANS RECOGNIZE THAT THE DROUGHT HAS CAUSED TREMENDOUS ECOLOGICAL DAMAGE ON THE ISLANDS, DAMAGE WHICH CAN BE REPAIRED ONLY OVER A PERIOD OF SEVERAL YEARS AND THEN ONLY IF A PATTERN OF PREDICTABLE RAINS RETURN TO THE ISLANDS. THE GOVERNMENT HAS RATHER AMBITIOUS PLANS TO REFOREST CAPE VERDE BUT RECOGNIZES THAT THIS WILL BE POSSIBLE ONLY IF THE CLIMATEPATTERN REVERSES ITSELF.

6. DESPITE INCREASING IMMIGRATION THE POPULATION OF CAPE VERDE CONTINUES TO GROW AT THE RATE OF 2.8 PERCENT PER YEAR. THE POPULATION IS EXPECTED TO DOUBLE IN THE NEXT TWENTY-FIVE YEARS. EACH YEAR THERE ARE AN ADDITIONAL TEN THOUSAND HUNGRY MOUTHS TO FEED. THIS MAY ACTUALLY BE A CONSERVATIVE ESTIMATE AS A MAJORITY OF THE PRESENT POPULATION IS UNDER SEVENTEEN YEARS OF AGE, THE AGE AT WHICH CAPEVERDEAN WOMEN NORMALLY BEGIN TO PRODUCE CHILDREN.

7. FOREIGN EXCHANGE PROBLEMS AND A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF CONFUSION AND DISORGANIZATION IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH HAVE RESULTED IN A GREAT DEFICIT IN EVEN BASIC MEDICINES AND OTHER ESSENTIAL
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 PRAIA 00221 02 OF 02 231901Z

HEALTH ITEMS. FOR SEVERAL MONTHS LITTLE BESIDES GAUZE AND ASPIRIN HAVE BEEN AVAILABLE IN THE LOCAL PHARMACIES. THOUGH THIS SITUATION IS LIKELY TO IMPROVE, PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE HEALTH SECTOR WILL NOT SO EASILY BE RESTORED.

8. DESPITE ALL OF THE ABOVE PROBLEMS THE PEOPLE OF CAPE VERDE DO NOT SEEM TO HAVE GIVEN UP ON CAPE VERDE AS A PLACE TO LIVE, OR AT LEAST HAVE NOT GIVEN UP YET. THE CAPE-VERDEANS ARE A HARDY PEOPLE WITH A SPIRIT OF RESISTANCE FORGED AND TESTED DURING OTHER DROUGHTS AND TRIALS.

9. RAIN IS THE TOPIC OF THE DAY IN CAPE VERDE. EVERYONE TALKS ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR RAIN THIS SUMMER. THE NEWS THAT RAINS HAD FALLEN IN BISSAU WAS WELCOMED IN CAPE VERDE AS TRADITIONALLY RAIN NEVER FALLS IN THE ISLANDS UNLESS IT FIRST OCCURS IN THE SISTER STATE. DISCUSSION OF THE PROSPECTS FOR RAIN INVOLVE MORE THAN SIMPLE WEATHER CHATTER. THE NEED FOR RAIN IS HEARTFELT IN THE ISLANDS. THE BELIEF OF MANY CAPEVERDEANS THAT RAINS WILL COME THIS YEAR HAS AN EMOTIONAL BASIS. IT IS GENERALLY RECOGNIZED THAT ANOTHER YEAR OF DROUGHT WILL PRODUCE EVEN GREATER AND PERHAPS IRREPAIRABLE DAMAGE OF BOTH AN ECOLOGICAL AND A PSYCHOLOGICAL NATURE. WHILE CAPEVERDEAN REISTANCE IS ALMOST LEGEND, THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT CRACKS IN THEIR CONFIDENCE ARE BEGINNING TO OCCUR.

10. IN THE CRIOULO LANGUAGE "TCHUBA" MEANS RAIN. THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES "TCHUBA" HAS ALSO BEEN USED TO INDICATE HOPE, AN ALMOST MYSTICAL BELIEF IN THE FUTURE AND A RELIGIOUS CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S WILL. "TCHUBA" IN THE SPIRITUAL SENSE WILL CARRY CAPE VERDE THROUGH ANOTHER YEAR AND PERHAPS SEVERAL MORE RAINLESS YEARS BUT THE YEARS OF DROUGHT AND DEPRIVATION, THE KNOWLEDGE THAT CAPE VERDE IS ALMOST ENTIRELY DEPENDENT ON INTER-UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 PRAIA 00221 02 OF 02 231901Z

NATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR SURVIVAL AND AN INCREASING CONCERN FOR THE FATE AND WELL BEING OF THE CHILDREN OF THE ISLANDS ARE TAKING THEIR TOLL. WHEN PRIME MINISTER PEDRO PIRES AT THE JUNE 10 CELEBRATION OF PORTUGUESE NATIONAL DAY EXPRESSED HIS BELIEF THAT THE RAINS WOULD RETURN TO CAPE VERDE THIS YEAR HIS WORDS HAD THE ECHO OF A PRAYER.
MCGOWAN

UNCLASSIFIED

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DROUGHTS, ECONOMIC REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978PRAIA00221
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780262-1037
Format: TEL
From: PRAIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780625/aaaaavtb.tel
Line Count: 212
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 5d77a182-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2226195
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CAPE VERDE--NINE YEARS OF DROUGHT--"TCHUBAI" ALSO MEANS HOPE SUMMARY: THE ISLANDS OF CAPE VERDE ARE NOW IN THEI
TAGS: SOCI, SPOP, PDEV, ECON
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/5d77a182-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014